

## Character Class

# Psychic Warrior

*By Skip Williams*



A psychic warrior offers a potent combination of martial and psionic power. A psychic warrior's forte is physical combat, but he has a reserve of psychic power to augment his fighting prowess. Some psychic warriors can prove exasperatingly indecisive as they search for just the right power to loose during a battle. Other psychic warriors literally let their psychic potential go to their heads, and that can plunge a whole party into situations they should have avoided. A psychic warrior played with verve and forethought, however, is a valuable addition to any party.

## Assets

A psychic warrior fights well and has a potent bag of psionic tricks. Here's a look at what you gain when you choose a psychic warrior.



- **Good Armor Class:** A psychic warrior can wear any kind of armor and use any kind of shield (except tower shields), which usually gives the character an impressive Armor Class. When a psychic warrior decides to mix it up with a foe, he can expect to get away with it, at least for a while.
- **Good Weapon Selection:** A psychic warrior can use any simple or martial weapon, which gives him access to some of the best weapons in the game. Some psychic warriors prefer to use natural weaponry that they obtain through psionic powers.
- **Psionic Powers:** A psychic warrior has access to powers that can literally knock foes off their feet. Other powers give a psychic warrior the uncanny ability to move to exactly the right spot on the battlefield at the right time or otherwise discomfort the enemy.

A psychic warrior begins play knowing only one power but builds up a considerable repertoire of

powers as he advances in level.

- **Bonus Feats:** Starting at 1st level, a psychic warrior can choose a psionic feat or a feat from the list of fighter bonus feats in the *Player's Handbook*. The psychic warrior can choose an additional bonus feat at 2nd level and every three levels thereafter. These bonus feats allow you to hone and focus your psychic warrior's combat and psionic abilities.
- **Good Fortitude Saves:** A psychic warrior uses the best progression for Fortitude saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). This helps the psychic warrior resist most effects that attack his body.

## Weaknesses

A psychic warrior pays a heavy price for his martial and psionic powers. Here are a few disadvantages you'll encounter when thinking about a psychic warrior character.

- **Fairly Weak Attack Bonus:** A psychic warrior's base attack bonus is three points every four levels (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). That's a good base attack bonus but not a great one for a fighting character. When facing a really tough opponent, a psychic warrior often must fall back on his psionic powers to stay in the fight.
- **Fairly Low Hit Points:** The psychic warrior has eight-sided hit dice, which give him a respectable hit point total but not so many hit points that he can outlast a formidable opponent. A psychic warrior can make up for his lack of hit points by bolstering his personal defenses or even healing himself with psionic powers, but doing so takes time and drains the psychic warrior's psionic resources.
- **Low Skill Points:** Psychic warriors receive a mere two skill points per level. Psychic warriors aren't particularly skillful, though they often can use their psionic powers to make up for this lack.
- **Poor Reflex and Will Saves:** Psychic warriors have the worst progression for both Reflex and Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). Psychic warriors aren't good at shrugging off effects that attack their minds or that affect whole areas. Most psychic warriors, however, have fairly high Wisdom scores (because Wisdom governs their psionic powers), and that improves their Will saves somewhat. Psychic warriors also have access to defensive powers that improve their saving throws or even make some saving throws unnecessary.
- **Limited Psionic Options:** A psychic warrior begins play with only one psionic power and few or no psionic power points. A psychic warrior gains a single psionic power and a handful of power points at each level beyond 1st. A psychic warrior's psionic powers must be selected from the rather limited psychic warrior power list, which is restricted to powers related to combat and a few powers that boost perception, provide concealment, or provide other useful abilities. A psychic warrior can expand his options somewhat through the Expanded Knowledge feat, but for the most part his psionic powers must have a martial theme.

## Playing a Classy Psychic Warrior

People who play great psychic warriors usually keep the following in mind.

### Develop a Fighting Plan and Style

Despite your fairly low base attack bonus and hit points, you're a fighting character. Your psionic powers distinguish you from cruder, less gifted combatants. Unfortunately, you don't have limitless psionic options, so spend some time finding ways to make the most of what you have. Consider how you will handle combat, and choose your psionic powers accordingly. For example, if you favor close-quarters fighting, consider powers that will boost your melee capability in some way. Powers such as *prevenom weapon* or psionic *lion's charge* make your attacks more effective. If you plan to serve as your group's main fighter, powers such as *vigor* or *body*

*adjustment* can give you the stamina to fill that role. If you favor ranged or mobile combat, consider *offensive precognition* or *skate*.

As you advance in level, choose powers that enhance your fighting style or give you new capabilities. For example, if you've emphasized melee, powers such as *strength of my enemy* and *vampiric blade* can boost your potential. You can give yourself new melee options with powers such as *stomp*, *hustle*, and *dimension slide*.

### **Use Your Psionic Potential Quickly and Aggressively**

Your fairly limited psionic reserve may tempt you to hold back, but powers you don't manifest won't help you or your party. You don't need to burn through all your power points during the first few encounters of an adventure, but don't take a beating when using a power can make things easier. Likewise, it usually requires a standard action to manifest a power. Once a fight begins, you might not have a standard action to spare (though you can spend extra power points to manifest some powers as swift actions), so it usually pays to manifest your powers when a battle begins or even before it begins if you can anticipate the encounter.

### **Be Flexible**

While it's a great idea to develop a fighting style and a collection of powers to match, keep in mind that you can fill several different roles in a party, especially once you gain a few levels and build up your repertoire of psionic powers.

As a fighting character, your natural place is at your party's front, where you can lead the way and protect your weaker allies. Powers such as *chameleon*, *compression*, *danger sense*, *body equilibrium*, and *ectoplasmic form* can make you an effective scout. Powers such as *elfsight* and *steadfast perception* can make you an effective sentry or rearguard.

### **Remember Your Friends**

You'll be at your best when you balance your fighting ability, psionic power, and fairly low hit points. That's easiest to achieve with help from your allies.

**Fighting Allies:** Characters such as barbarians and fighters have more hit points and a slightly better attack bonus than you have. You might be tempted to leave the bulk of the combat chores to such allies. This isn't always a bad thing, especially when you need time to manifest a power or two to get into fighting trim.

Remember, however, that you're a fighting character, too. Don't hang back too long when a fight breaks out. When you join a fight, keep track of what your fighting allies are doing. Make sure your fighting allies don't become surrounded or flanked. Also try to gauge the opposition. Double up with a fighting ally to defeat powerful opponents quickly. When facing hordes of lesser foes, form a fighting line or ring and engage as many foes as you can.

**Stealthy Allies:** Stealthy characters such as rogues and rangers often need the same kinds of combat support that fighting characters do. If your equipment and psionic powers permit, be ready to accompany stealthy characters on scouting trips to provide some protection or an extra set of eyes and ears. If you stay behind by choice or by necessity, be ready to move to the scout's rescue when he finds trouble (as characters often do when taking point). Just be careful to avoid whatever fate befell the scout! Remember that characters with the sneak attack ability need combat support in the form of an ally who can help them flank enemies. Get used to fighting in partnership with such characters.

**Arcane Spellcasters:** Wizards, sorcerers, and bards can pack a real punch with their spells, and they often serve as the party's heavy artillery. These characters are notoriously vulnerable to physical attacks thanks to their poor

Armor Classes and very low hit points. These characters will rely on you to keep the opposition at a distance, and it's in your best interest to do so.

**Divine Spellcasters:** Get friendly and stay friendly with your party's cleric, druid, or paladin. This character's healing spells can keep you on your feet when you take damage. With the right selection of psionic powers, you can provide your own healing. In an intense battle, however, you probably will take damage faster than you can heal it. Healing yourself also takes time that could be better spent attacking the enemy, so it's best to accept some divine support whenever it's available.

## Key Equipment

No matter how carefully you choose your psionic powers, you still need gear to reach your full potential. The essentials for you include --

- **Primary Melee Weapon:** The psychic warrior power list includes numerous powers such as *bite of the wolf* and *dissolving touch* that seem to make melee weaponry unnecessary. Manifesting these powers eats up power points, however, and you can't always count on having enough power available to manifest these powers every time you need to fight, especially early in your career.

You won't regret carrying a decent martial weapon. If you plan on using a shield, it's hard to beat a longsword or battle axe. A greatsword or great axe is a good choice if you don't plan to use a shield. You might also want to use a bonus feat on an exotic weapon proficiency, such as bastard sword, if you wish to maximize the damage you can deal while using a shield.

No matter how you plan to fight, a masterwork weapon is worth the money if you can afford it. If you plan to fight with your primary melee weapon most of the time, a magical weapon is a necessity, though powers such as *metaphysical weapon* and *weapon of energy* can allow you to put off that investment for a while.

- **Backup Melee Weapon:** It's always a good idea to have a second melee weapon available in case you lose your primary weapon or if your primary weapon proves ineffective. Make sure the secondary weapon deals a different kind of damage from your primary weapon. For example, if you normally use a longsword (a slashing weapon), consider a morningstar (which deals both bludgeoning and piercing damage) as a backup.

You can use one of the powers discussed under Primary Melee Weapons as your backup weapon if you like, but keep in mind that having a light slashing weapon is a real lifesaver when a monster swallows you whole or whenever you must fight in a restricted space. When you're literally in the belly of a beast, it might prove hard to manifest a power.

- **Ranged Weapon:** Your foes won't always oblige you by staying within melee reach, so carry a martial ranged weapon even when you've developed your melee potential. A longbow has good range and deals good damage. If you have a decent Strength score (and you probably do), get a composite longbow that gives you your full Strength bonus on damage.
- **Armor and Shield:** Defensive powers such as *inertial armor* and *thicken skin* might tempt you skip wearing armor altogether. That isn't a good idea, especially at the beginning of your career. Start with the best heavy armor you can afford and plan to carry a shield unless you're using a two-handed weapon. The *force screen* power is great for adding a little shield bonus to your Armor Class when you're fighting with two hands.

Later in your career, you might want to use light armor, such as a chain shirt, to maintain your

speed and mobility, especially if your selection of psionic powers includes a few Armor Class boosters.

- **Backup Powers:** As a psychic warrior, you're going to run out of power points sooner or later. Without any power points, you're nothing special. It's hard to beat a cognizance crystal for keeping a few power points in reserve.

A dorje is useful for manifesting powers that you use often, such as *body adjustment*, *force screen*, or *inertial armor*. Best of all, you can use a dorje to manifest any power on the psychic warrior class list, even if you don't know the power. Because you don't know too many powers, a dorje can expand your psionic options considerably.

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## About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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